

Disrupting Culinary Education: Making a Case for a European Curriculum Framework for Culinary Higher Education

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ABSTRACT: Culinary arts is a neglected social and life science, which has historically been treated as a hands-on discipline with little academic input. Over the past decade there has been an influx of research in the discipline, specifically in culinary education across the world. Culinary arts is often relegated to the tourism sector, which fails to take into account that the culinary arts permeate through society, economy, culture and politics. It is also commandeered by the health and wellness sector, which has a singular focus and does not take into account the breadth and richness of the discipline.

The late twentieth century brought about the start of a revolution in culinary education. This movement saw the advancement of culinary arts to the level of higher education in third level institutes and universities. It is crucial to draw from the cultural, political, and social context of culinary educational development, to understand the inconsistent provision of educational opportunities across the European Framework of Qualifications in some European countries.

The traditional approach to training culinary professionals was limited to technical education, which focused on the narrow skills requirements for the industry. Higher education that utilises a blended liberal and vocational approach creates the opportunity for culinary practitioners to fulfil their potential beyond the traditional roles of industry operatives.

Future culinarians should be critical thinkers with the opportunities and tools to contribute to the food and beverage industry through their creativity and innovation. Improving the education of culinary practitioners as well as the standing of culinary knowledge, will safeguard the food and beverage industry in these disruptive times.

This paper will introduce ongoing research into European culinary higher education. The research will result in the development of a new curriculum and pedagogical framework for culinary arts. It is proposed that an integrated framework for higher education will support greater inclusion, collaboration, and cooperation between culinary education stakeholders across Europe. A multi-country case study will inform the framework.

The provision of higher education programmes in culinary arts has grown significantly since the turn of the millennium (Mitchell *et.al.*, 2013). However, the introduction of new programmes across Europe has been inconsistent. In order to understand why some European

countries provide educational opportunities from level six to level eight on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) and others do not, it is essential to draw from the context of the education system. Culinary education is limited in some European Higher Education Area (EHEA) countries to EQF levels five and six. There exists significant pedagogical disparity across Europe. As such, there is a need for a Europe-wide standardised curriculum model to support higher education for culinary arts.

Background

The discipline of culinary arts has long been supported by the well-established tradition of professional cookery education (Mitchell, *et.al.*, 2013). The traditional master-apprenticeship educational model, utilised since the Middle-Ages, allowed for the transmission of knowledge and skills from generation to generation, and from master to apprentice (Miles, 2007). The 19th and 20th centuries saw the introduction of formal institutionalised culinary education in Europe, which provided practitioners with practical and technical skills using a vocational educational approach (Emms, 2005). Professional culinary knowledge was confined to industry kitchens and vocational schools (Bliss, 2012). However, the changing professional and educational environments of the modern world have altered the culinary landscape (Eren, 2018). Contemporary culinary practitioners require not only practical skills but also an innovative education that enables each student to fulfil their educational potential (Hu, 2010).

Culinary education comprises a broad field that includes but is not limited to food service, gastronomy, culinary science, and food technology (Eren, 2018). The vastness of this field has made it difficult to achieve academic acceptance and for it to 'assert its own ontological heritage' (Hegarty *et.al.*, 2010, p.74). It has been identified that the development of a firm theoretical foundation and a curriculum framework would promote further acceptance of culinary arts as an academic discipline (Heusdens *et.al.*, 2016).

Cooking historian Richard Wrangham embraces a multi-disciplinary approach to understanding the importance of culinary knowledge with a central idea that cooking impacts many 'aspects of life from nutrition to society' (Wrangham, 2010, p.13). Michael Pollan, food writer and journalist, links culinary culture, the cost of food, and historical and modern political unrest. He provides examples of the power of food on societies and the importance of a stable food system on politics (Pollan, 2014). Brillat-Savarin made similar links 'the destiny of

nations depends on how they nourish themselves' (Brillat-Savarin, 2009). The acceptance of the multi-disciplinary nature of the field has contributed to the academic acceptance of subjects such as food studies, which appear to be a more traditional and scholarly field of research (Halfond, 2011). The shift away from the traditional model has facilitated the elevation of culinary arts into institutions and universities of higher education which has resulted in culinary knowledge moving into the academic field (Ekincek *et al.*, 2017).

According to Ridley (2012, p.1), the position culinary arts 'on the academic map of knowledge creation', is yet to be firmly established. An analysis of the epistemological roots of culinary knowledge in Europe will aid in broadening the understanding of the position and context of the development of modern systems of culinary education in Europe. To comprehend the evolution of culinary education, it is vital to first examine the social, cultural, political, technological, and educational development in Europe, which fostered the culinary professions and cuisines.

It is postured that the acceptance of culinary arts as an academic discipline is impeded by the lack of distinction and clarity surrounding the nature of a satisfactory theoretical underpinning and curriculum framework for the discipline (Jooste, 2007). The subject remains somewhat ambiguous, thus, requires a developed framework that defines the scope and purpose of culinary arts as an academic discipline (Harrington *et al.*, 2005). The practitioners of culinary arts have historically been oppressed peoples that served the dominant classes (Mac Con Iomaire, 2009). The discipline itself has been oppressed as a result of the historical underestimation and oversight of culinary knowledge and its value to human knowledge as a whole (Woodhouse, 2018).

According to Bliss (2012), historically, practical skills and the occupations that utilised them were considered lowly, ignoble and unbecoming as they provided for man's basic human needs. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), the categorisation and stratification of types of knowledge is an established and ingrained practice in academia and society. Socrates argued that culinary knowledge is habitual and does not stand as equal to the arts: 'cooking: which has indeed the appearance of an art, but according to my view is no art, but a habit and a knack' (Plato, 1864, p.27).

Cooking, food, and culinary arts play a significant role in all societies, both old and new. The roles that food plays in society are deeply engrained in the culture, manners, and practice (Wrangham, 2010). Culinary arts contribute to the formation of identity and are utilised culturally to create distinctions in the societal hierarchy between gender, socio-economic class, or ethnicity (Douglas, 1984; Charles and Kerr, 1988). The power structures that society operates within dictate the value of different fields and groups (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977). As the famous

quote from Brillat-Savarin dictates 'tell me what you eat, and I shall tell you who you are' (Fisher, 1971, p.3). Felipe Fernandez-Armesto (2001, p.4) proposed that cooking is the 'index of the humanity of humankind', and it transforms not only ingredients but significantly contributes to the evolution of society. Cultural anthropologist, Claude Levi-Strauss also contributed to the elevation of culinary knowledge through his publications, in particular, *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964) where he proposed that the human state through culinary arts can be defined.

Parkhurst-Ferguson (1998) proposed an interesting concept that the cultural field of culinary arts and gastronomy did not flourish until food, gastronomy, and culinary knowledge became topics of debate and discussion by food writers during the 19th century. Culinary arts moved into the public space. Books and literature on food began to bring about change. The evolutionary changes in the educational philosophy of culinary arts education; from guilds to vocational training, to higher education are essential to the position of culinary knowledge and its practitioners in Europe.

Methodology

During the initial stages of this research, it was observed that the current provision of culinary education in each of the European countries was not available in a published or compiled document and thus, the information was largely unknown. In order to develop a picture of the uptake of culinary higher education across Europe, it was necessary to carry out a high-level overview of each country. Before an analysis took place, it was crucial to decide whether to focus on the European Union or to look at the breadth of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It was decided to start with the 48 EHEA countries to create a broadly accessible and functional culinary curriculum framework that fit into the different systems of education.

The country selection process was developed using a comparative analysis of secondary data, relating to education systems, policy and the culinary culture profiles of the EHEA countries. The Framework Method (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994) was deemed an appropriate methodology to rationalise and identify 'countries of interest' in terms of the primary objective to develop a European culinary arts education framework. The Framework Method is systematic and highly suitable for research teams, where reflexive, discursive and critical debate and dialogue amongst team members during the analysis stage, embed rigour and reliability into the process (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The methodology for this study was also supported by the evaluation methodology employed in the Evaluation of the EQF Recommendation (ICFGHK & Technopolis Ltd, 2013), which had similarities in objective and purpose and involved four sequential stages of activity.

Stage 1: Familiarisation Phase:

The first stage involved the research team identifying key characteristics, reviewing and agreeing on reliable national and EU sources of secondary data. A rubric was devised including criteria, scoring, priority weighting and a compensation rating method which were used to analyse the matrix that was created using the characteristics and countries.

Stage 2: Inception and Scoping Phase

A matrix was employed in order to capture a broad spectrum of information on the EHEA countries in an accessible and useful format that could be easily analysed and used to compare. The use of a transparent, rigorous and reliable system that encouraged stage by stage traceability allowed for each decision to be made using a hurdle-based model. Categories were developed to capture positive indicators and characteristics of culinary arts education in each country. A scoring system was developed in order to objectively evaluate the characteristics of each countries' education system and culinary culture. Specific criteria were determined for the scoring of each theme. The purpose of the scoring system was to enable the identification of relevant countries with specific attributes that were useful for addressing the objectives.

Stage 3: Secondary Data Collection Phase

Data was collected from publicly available further and higher education programme databases, national qualifications frameworks, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) country referencing reports, published national and institutional curricula, published national and EU policy documents. Publications originating from national and Pan-European professional bodies, confederations and private sector academies and organisations representing the culinary arts discipline, were also utilised.

Stage 4: Analysis and recommendations

After the initial matrix was examined, it was determined that countries with very limited or no formal culinary education information available should be eliminated from further analysis. There were 34 countries identified to have the necessary attributes to progress to the next stage. Several categories were added to the matrix to differentiate further the EHEA countries based on culinary arts, culinary education and culinary culture. A thematic analysis was carried out, and the countries were scored against five key criteria for case selection. The rationalisation method generated 18 'countries of interest'. An analysis and comparison of the structure of the systems of education of the final 18 countries will be conducted, utilising a multi-country case study approach.

Results & Discussion

This section summarises and discusses the findings of the country selection process outlined in the methodology. The

initial high-level analysis of the EHEA countries has resulted in the identification of three different levels of provision of culinary education across the EHEA. The groups emerged from the data collected through several layers of analysis.

The first group of countries provide lower-level qualifications and training courses, primarily below degree level, in culinary arts and catering. The first group represents 29% of the EHEA. The second group offer higher education qualifications in related but non-discipline specific qualifications such as hospitality management or hotel management. It emerged that a significant number of countries offer higher qualifications, at minimum to degree level, with culinary components, but fail to support discipline-specific programmes at present. This second group represent 33% of the EHEA. The results from this high-level analysis, indicate that approximately 62% of the EHEA countries are yet to fully recognise and embrace culinary arts as an academic discipline. The low-levels of integration and provision of discipline-specific culinary programmes in many EHEA countries demonstrate the position that culinary arts occupy in society. The analysis indicated that countries in the second group often relegate culinary arts to small roles within tourism, hospitality and hotel management programs.

The third group comprises the remaining 38% of the EHEA countries. The eighteen countries in the third group provide discipline-specific qualifications, at minimum to degree level, in culinary arts and gastronomy. These countries are qualitatively significant as being representative of the characteristics of the university and non-university higher education programmes and qualifications in culinary arts, as well as an influential culinary culture and identity.

The method developed for the analysis of the provision of culinary education across the EHEA provides a new and valuable tool for the culinary community to describe the positioning of culinary arts as an academic discipline across the EHEA. It will also be utilised to evaluate and compare policy, curriculum, assessment and other areas of pedagogy in the context of a multi-country case study in European culinary higher education. The resource that has been created during this initial exploratory research provides a grounded benchmark for charting and interpreting the positionality of the discipline within the education systems of each country.

The subsequent research will include further analysis of the characteristics of the different systems of education in the remaining EHEA countries. The investigation will further categorise the countries to enable the selection of participants for the case study. While pedagogical frameworks exist in many disciplines and fields of research; such a framework is a new contribution to the culinary arts higher education in Europe. The potential applicability of a discipline-specific framework for culinary arts is multifaceted. The research will explore the scope of the

discipline through an examination of modern curricula and of historical practices. An examination of culinary education, curricula, and policies in specific countries will be carried out to inform the new framework for culinary higher education.

The research will examine the curricula and the curriculum development methodologies utilised in a sample of the group three countries. These countries are currently leading the EHEA in the provision of education and will provide crucial insight into the discipline. This study is the focus of current PhD research and as such, is limited by the associated time and resources.

At the turn of the millennium, culinary arts began, for the first time to be approached and understood as an academic discipline. Jooste (2007), accredits some of the progress to enhanced societal expectations around food and increased access to new dining experiences. Until the 21st century, higher education in culinary arts, in particular, undergraduate degrees and masters were exceedingly rare in Europe (Hegarty, 2004). There have now been twenty years of higher education in culinary arts, and we must use the knowledge gathered during this time, specifically the methods of curriculum development, curriculum content and design to build a framework for the future.

In order to prepare the students of today to thrive in the ever-changing food and beverage industry, it is critical to provide them with a strong educational foundation (Hu, 2010; Mitchell et al., 2013). Higher education that utilises a blended liberal and vocational approach creates the opportunity to develop culinary practitioners that are more than industry operatives (Cullen, 2012). The broader education of this approach to culinary education better equips students for success in the innovative and creative job market (Mitchell et al., 2013). The multi-country case study provides a unique opportunity to review the first two decades of culinary higher education curriculum development. Modern culinary arts and the education thereof, are a product of their history and the context in which they developed.

Access to quality degree, masters and doctorate programmes in culinary arts and gastronomy creates the potential not only to carry the body of knowledge forward to the next generation but also provides the opportunity to build upon it through research and practice (Jooste, 2007). Future culinarians will also be critical thinkers with the opportunities and tools to contribute to the food and beverage industry through their creativity and innovation (Miles, 2007; Nailufar, Setiawati and Mariana, 2020).

Conclusion

The late twentieth century brought about the start of a revolution in culinary education. The results presented in this paper are the conclusion of a significant piece of work that represents the first steps in the investigation into the provision of European culinary education. These initial

findings indicate that many students are unable to access discipline-specific culinary and gastronomy programmes in their own country. Improving the education of culinary practitioners and the standing of culinary knowledge will support the preservation and success of food and beverage industry through a steady influx of graduates with a modern culinary education.

The new framework for culinary arts education will act as a 'reference point' for information and data on the structure of the culinary arts education system in Europe, including the number and type of programmes, institutions and learners. Additionally, identification and analysis of barriers to access and progression will be of benefit to the culinary arts research community. The framework will enable and support future educators in the development of curricula that support culinarians to become critical thinkers, with the opportunities and tools to contribute to the industry, through creativity and innovation. The improvement of culinary education and the standing of culinary knowledge will support the enhancement of the food and beverage industry, the recognition of qualifications, and the elevation of culinary arts to a modern academic discipline.

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